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Security Council

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7625th meeting

Wednesday, 17 February 2016, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ramírez Carreño	(Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of))
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ambassador Motohide Yoshikawa, Permanent Representative of Japan, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

I now give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to brief the Security Council once again on the latest developments in Yemen.

It has been two months since the parties met in Switzerland for the first face-to-face talks in the peace process. Those talks produced agreements on several measures, which have provided much-needed practical and moral support to the Yemeni people, including the delivery of humanitarian aid to the city of Ta'izz and the release of some prisoners.

The announcement of a cessation of hostilities on the first day of the talks was accompanied by the establishment of a ee-escalation and coordination committee aimed at strengthening adherence to the cessation of hostilities. There was also broad agreement on the principles of a general framework based on the provisions of resolution 2216 (2015). The talks served as the beginning of a process towards agreements on ending the war and Yemen's return to a peaceful political transition.

The parties left the last round of talks in a positive spirit, with practical proposals, recommendations and hope for a better future for Yemen and the Yemeni people. Tragically, the security situation in Yemen has deteriorated since the end of the talks. The latest United Nations reports indicate that more than 6,000 Yemenis have lost their lives since March 2015, and more than 35,000 have been injured.

Yemen is living through the most heartbreaking days in its history. Many parts of the country are again witnessing air strikes and extensive ground fighting. There has also been a significant increase in the number of missiles fired indiscriminately into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The escalation of military activities, along with the worsening of regional tensions, has created additional obstacles that threaten to delay a new round of talks.

There has been a notable upsurge in the number and magnitude of attacks carried out by terrorist groups in Aden, Lahej, Abyan, Shabwa and Sana'a. There have been attacks on Yemeni army checkpoints and residences of key security officials. The assassination of prominent political and security officials in the south of the country has continued unabated. On 28 January, an attack on the presidential palace in Aden resulted in the death of eight people, including civilian bystanders. Earlier today, a suicide bomber attacked a Yemeni army camp in Aden, reportedly killing at least 10 people.

I have repeatedly underlined the increasing presence of terrorist groups in Yemen. That creates a long-term threat for both the country and the region. The absence of the State in many parts of Yemen has facilitated the expansion of those terrorist groups. Al-Qaida and the Islamic State are present in many parts of Yemeni territory. There are reports of their growing influence in large areas of the governorate of Hadramout and their control of its port, maritime traffic and illegal oil trade. Reports of attacks on civilians, including stonings and executions of captured civilians and Yemeni army soldiers, are deeply worrying.

The basic freedoms of Yemenis, including the freedom of expression, continue to be undermined. There has been significant rise in the systematic persecution of civil society activists in Yemen, including reports of violent attacks and arbitrary detention of many journalists. Acts of intimidation, harassment and disappearances of journalists are a clear violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Yemenis continue to face grave violations of international humanitarian law. Respect for human rights and international humanitarian law is critical to the ability of Yemenis to survive the current crisis with

dignity and safety. The agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations are doing their utmost to uphold the rights of Yemenis and provide much-needed assistance. It is important that all United Nations staff be able to work in safety and without restriction. I call on the Government of Yemen and all other stakeholders to uphold those principles and to respect and support the work of the United Nations and its agencies.

I have been engaged in intensive consultations with Yemeni leaders and regional partners in recent weeks. I discussed the challenges facing the peace process with the Foreign Ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, France and with the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Japan and the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, all of whom underlined their continued support for an end to violence in Yemen and a political settlement. I met with Yemeni Vice-President and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah on 8 and 16 January, in addition to holding repeated meetings with representatives of the Yemeni Government, other Yemeni leaders and civil society members. I also travelled to Sana'a, where I met with senior officials from the Houthis and the General People's Congress, as well as key political parties and women's and youth groups.

During the latest round of consultations, I sought to ensure that some of the positive commitments that emerged from the talks in Switzerland were implemented. While far from a comprehensive settlement, those commitments yield tangible benefits for the Yemeni people and bolster the peace process.

I worked for the release of two Saudi nationals by the Houthis on 14 January, after almost 10 months in captivity. That was welcomed by the Secretary-General and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. That positive development was soon followed by the release of the Yemeni Minister of Technical and Vocational Education, Abdulrazzak Al-Ashwal, and four Yemeni political and media activists. I shall continue to press for, and work towards, the release of others detainees.

Building on the commitments made in Switzerland, United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations expanded the delivery of assistance to Ta'izz, including to areas that had been cut off for many months. The World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and Médecins Sans Frontières have all been able to deliver critically needed assistance to Ta'izz in recent weeks. I hope that that city and other areas that have suffered tremendously in recent months will continue to receive assistance on a regular basis. I repeat my call to all parties to ensure that humanitarian agencies have free and unhindered access to all parts of Yemen.

I have also pursued agreements that seek to preserve the functioning of key State institutions on which the Yemeni people depend. Preserving their functioning helps current service delivery and will also facilitate a faster and more effective recovery following an agreement. The Central Bank's Board of Directors met recently in Amman, with the participation of the Yemeni Minister of Finance and the Sana'a-based Central Bank Governor. Together with the Resident Coordinator, UNICEF and the World Bank, I am working to relaunch Yemen's Social Welfare Fund, which will provide critical financial support for the poorest of Yemen's people.

Those are some positive measures that demonstrate a willingness to cooperate in order to preserve the viability and effectiveness of key State institutions in advance of a settlement. The implementation of those measures will require continued political support from all parties, as well as generous support from donors to replenish the various funds and mechanisms, so as to contribute to the stability of the Yemeni economy. The conflict is causing grave damage to the capacity of Yemen's public and private sectors. Both are critical for Yemen's future economic prospects and the ability of people to survive under the present circumstances. Humanitarian aid is critical, yet limited in its reach. Many Yemenis continue to rely on private-sector economic activity. For that reason, the extensive damage to private-sector infrastructure is of great concern.

In spite of the collapse of the cessation of hostilities, the de-escalation and coordination committee has continued to function, with constructive participation by all sides. The parties have committed to strengthen the capacity of the committee and to agree on a precise location for its meetings. The work of the de-escalation and coordination committee is essential in order to ensure the success of the cessation of hostilities in the future.

Despite those areas of limited progress, deep divisions persist that prevent me from calling for the next round of talks. The parties remain divided over whether a new round of talks should be convened with or without a new cessation of hostilities. Unfortunately,

I have not received sufficient assurances that a new cessation of hostilities, should I call for one, would be respected. As the Secretary-General has stated repeatedly, there is no military solution to this conflict. Recommitment to a cessation of hostilities leading to a permanent ceasefire is the practical expression of this truth. I urge the Security Council to support that step and take action towards its implementation as soon as possible.

Yemen has suffered greatly. Its people have witnessed unspeakable tragedies. The country's infrastructure has been destroyed. Families have been dispersed. The social fabric is torn apart. This is a critical and most difficult phase. With every passing day, more and more Yemeni lives are lost. A new cessation of hostilities will open the way for new talks and an agreement on Yemen's return to a peaceful and orderly transition. I shall continue to work with all sides in Yemen, the region and the international community to build consensus on the key elements of such future agreements. The conflict in Yemen is political, so the solution must also be political. Only an inclusive peace process will ensure a future of reconciliation and peace in the country.

The Yemeni people have shown a spirit of compromise in the interest of preserving the unity of their country many times in the past. We must collectively help Yemen regain that spirit of compromise. That is the only way Yemenis will be be able to overcome the current violence and build a peace process that can bring together all of Yemen's diverse communities and allow them to jointly and peacefully look to their future and the future of their country.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed for his briefing.

I now call on Ambassador Yoshikawa, Permanent Representative of Japan, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): Pursuant to sub-paragraph 19 (e) of resolution 2140 (2014), I have the honour to report to the Security Council on the work of the Committee established pursuant to that resolution. My text will be circulated to the members.

This is my first briefing to the Council in my capacity as Chair of the Committee. My predecessor, Ambassador Raimonda Murmokaitė, last briefed the Council on 23 October 2015 (see S/PV.7542). I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for her excellent work as a Chair of the Committee.

The Committee's Panel of Experts submitted its final report (see S/2016/73) to the Committee on 11 January and briefed the Committee on its main findings and recommendations on 22 January. In accordance with paragraph 5 of resolution 2204 (2015), the Panel submitted its report to the Council on 22 January, which was published on 26 January.

My briefing today comes shortly before the Council is scheduled to vote on a new draft resolution renewing the assets freeze and tavel ban measures, as well as the mandate of the Panel of Experts. The new draft resolution presents Council members with an opportunity to refine, and offer additional guidance on, the implementation of the targeted sanctions measures, particularly the targeted arms embargo. While there are different views regarding the sanctions instrument, the Council is unanimous in its calls for a political solution to the crisis and for support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. With that in mind, I would like to reiterate that sanctions are an important tool available to the Security Council for preventive, as opposed to punitive, purposes, and that the Council should be guided by Articles 39 and 41 of the Charter of the United Nations when considering sanctions. Sanctions are not an end in themselves, and they should be leveraged to support the political process, which should be Yemen-led and brokered by the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the importance of the full implementation by Member States of all sanctions measures imposed by resolutions 2140 (2014), 2204 (2015) and 2216 (2015), as well as the need for the relevant reporting obligations to be upheld. I would like to encourage the cooperation of all Member States with the Panel of Experts, including by providing the Panel with requested information in a timely manner and by facilitating its visits.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Yoshikawa for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.25 p.m.